



## Discover Britain

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### ***After four years of war, the poppy flower was still abundant in the fields of Northern France making it the symbol for Remembrance Day***

Over the last couple of weeks, you will have seen people wearing poppies around our towns and villages. So why poppies?

During the First World War (or the Great War) between 1914-18, the areas of Northern France known as Flanders and Picardy saw some of the most concentrated and bloodiest fighting. There was complete devastation of buildings, roads and trees. Where homes and farms once stood became a sea of mud – on the one hand a grave for the dead, on the other an area where men still lived and fought. The only other living thing which survived each year was the poppy, flowering with the coming of the warm weather. The sight of the poppies brought life, hope, colour and reassurance to those still fighting.

The sight so moved a doctor, John McCrae, serving with the Canadian Armed Forces that he scribbled the following verses in his pocket book in 1915:

*In Flanders' fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place: and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly*

*Scarce heard amid the guns below  
We are the dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie  
In Flanders' fields*

*Take up our quarrel with the foe;  
To you from failing hands we throw*

*The torch; be yours to hold it high,  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders' fields*

McCrae was to die three years later in a military hospital on the French Channel coast, and his dying words were said to have been, "Tell them this, if ye break faith with us who die, we shall not sleep."

#### ***The war ended***

In 1918, on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month, the First World War ended, and for the men and women who had survived the world would never be the same again.

#### ***Wearing the poppy***

Moina Michael, an American secretary in Europe during the war was moved by McCrae's work and bought red poppies with money given to her by work colleagues. She wore one herself and sold the remainder to her friends to raise a small amount of money for servicemen in need. Her French colleague, Madame Guerin, was encouraged by this achievement with the poppy emblem and proposed the making of artificial poppies to sell to help ex-servicemen and their dependents. Thus the movement started.

#### ***History of the Royal British Legion***

The British Legion was formed to bring together the four existing national organisations of ex-servicemen which had come into being as a result of the Great War. It became the Royal British Legion in 1971, its Golden Jubilee year. In 1981, the Diamond Jubilee year, full membership was extended to serving members of Her Majesty's Forces.

The first actual Poppy Day was held in Britain Nov. 11, 1921, and was a national success, and is now an annual event – the biggest ceremony taking place in London at the Cenotaph in Whitehall. This first poppy day event helped to establish the Royal British Legion Poppy Factory, employing mainly disabled people who make poppies, wreaths and other items associated with today's Poppy Appeal.

#### ***Remembrance Day services***

The nearest Sunday to Nov. 11 is always Remembrance Sunday, and this year it is Nov. 9.

RAF Lakenheath will send representatives to many of the services being held in and around our local community, and you would also be welcome at a service in your local area. And just so you know, the locals like to see their American neighbours in their uniforms.



Courtesy photo

**Capt. Julie Travnicek, 494th Fighter Squadron, and Wylie Noble, an American World War II veteran, place a remembrance wreath at a ceremony in Watton last year.**

## RAF Lakenheath commemorates Remembrance, Veteran's Day

The Liberty Wing will commemorate the sacrifices made by veterans when the 48th Fighter Wing commander, Col. Doug Richardson, lays a wreath Tuesday at the Wings of Liberty Park here.

The 15 minute Veteran's Day ceremony begins at 11 a.m. Uniform is the battle dress uniform.

The wing will also be represented at

various Remembrance Day ceremonies throughout the local community. Among them are:

**Nov. 8** – 94th Bomb Group & Dunkirk Veterans Memorial Wreath Laying, Abbey Gardens, Bury St. Edmunds

**Nov. 9** – Remembrance Day at Feltwell Village; Remembrance Day at Beeston & Bittering Parish Council, Beeston Church-

yard; Remembrance Day at Bury St. Edmunds Town War Memorial; Remembrance Day at King's Lynn War Memorial; Remembrance Day at Brandon British Royal Legion, Market Hill, Brandon; Remembrance Day at Lakenheath British Royal Legion Village War Memorial; RAF Watton Remembrance Day Ceremony at RAF Watton.